
HQ U.S. Army Installation Management Command, Europe Region



Public Affairs Office
Unit 29353, Box 200 APO AE 09014
69033 Heidelberg
DSN 370-7549/7235
Tel.: 06221-57-7549/7235

Press Release

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Shipping pets takes preparation

Heidelberg, Germany – Installation Management Command-Europe is gearing up for a very high volume of Soldiers and Families leaving Europe this summer. And many are returning home with their pets.

To ensure your pet's trip goes smoothly, here are some tips:

Plan Ahead.

Ensure vaccinations and health records are current. All pets need a health certificate that is less than 10 days old at time of flight, along with a rabies vaccination that is at least 30 days old but not older than one year. Animals not old enough to be rabies-immunized before travel need a note from a veterinarian waiving this requirement.

"It is also very important to have at least two copies of your orders because it will help speed your pet through customs and a complete contact address and phone number in the U.S is required," said Jeff Schott, IMCOM-Europe transportation office. "It is also important to ask your sponsor or point of contact at your next duty station if any local or national pet restrictions apply."

Make Reservations.

Contact your commercial travel office to make reservations for your pet and all members of your household after you receive permanent change station orders and have a confirmed household goods pick-up date.

"U.S. air carrier websites contain information on rules, policies and procedures for pet travel on the aircraft," Schott added, cautioning, however, that information is general and subject to changes.

Be prepared.

The cost of shipping a pet can be expensive, with the owner being responsible for all costs. Ensure shipping kennels or cages meet standards for size, ventilation, strength and design. Animals must have enough room to stand up and turn around, and each species

must have its own kennel with the exception of compatible cats and dogs of similar size. When in doubt use a larger kennel. Dogs and cats must be at least eight weeks old and must be weaned before traveling by air.

Instructions for feeding and providing water to the animal over a 24-hour period must be attached to the kennel, noted Robin Brown-Jones, IMCOM-Europe logistics division. “The 24-hour schedule will assist the airline in providing care for your animal in case it is diverted from its original destination,” she said.

Pet owners are required to certify pets have been offered food and water within four hours of transport, and the documentation must include the time and date of feeding. Food and water dishes must be securely attached and be accessible to caretakers without opening the kennel. Food and water must be provided to puppies and kittens every 12 hours if they are two to four months old. Mature animals must be fed every 24 hours and given water every 12 hours.

Be Aware.

Restrictions on shipping pets are established to ensure animals are not exposed to extreme hot or cold temperatures. Restrictions can apply at originating, connecting or terminating airport locations. Owners will be notified in advance if a restriction applies, Brown-Jones said, adding that if a restriction is enforced, “your pet may not be able to fly on your scheduled flight.”

Also, pets may be re-routed to another airport or held over until conditions at the origin or destination improve. “Please understand that this is done to protect the welfare of your pet,” Brown-Jones explained. “Have a back-up plan just in case.”

Commercial Pet Shippers.

An alternate option is to ship your pet through a commercial animal shipper. These companies have been around for decades and specialize in pet shipping. They offer daily departures, same day arrivals, boarding service, daily flights to more than 200 stateside airports, along with kennels available in various sizes. The cost is more expensive; however, they can normally ship your pet when restrictions are enforced by the airlines.

Additionally, there is no military entitlement to ship pets home when it is time to PCS, Brown-Jones stressed. “It is the responsibility of the member,” she said, “to make arrangements and pay for the shipping costs.”

Visit the U.S. Army, Europe Customs web site at <http://www.hqusareur.army.mil/opm/pets.htm> for more information, or contact a veterinary detachment office for more details.

Cutline:

Before being shipped home, all pets need a health certificate that is less than 10 days old at time of flight, along with a rabies vaccination that is at least 30 days old but not older than one year. (Army photo)

Frequently asked questions on shipping pets stateside

Q. Will the government pay to ship my pet?

A. No. The member is responsible for arranging and paying all costs associated with shipping pets.

Q. Can my pet and I travel on the same aircraft?

A. Yes, unless pet spaces are full or a heat restriction is issued by your airline. Restrictions are established to protect the health of your pet during extreme hot or cold temperatures. If a heat embargo is issued, your pet may be restricted from flying until conditions improve or re-routed on another airplane. Pet owners are normally given advanced notice of any restrictions.

Q. What if my pet cannot be reserved on my flight?

A. Due to the busy summer travel season, pet spaces on your scheduled flight may not be available. If so, the commercial travel office will try and book your pet on another flight or airline. Remember any costs incurred for shipping your pet is a member responsibility.

Q. Must I go through the commercial travel office to ship my pet?

A. Using the commercial travel office to ship your pet is convenient but not the only option available. There are commercial pet shipping companies that specialize in shipping pets. The cost is more expensive, but they can normally ship your pet when other airlines can't due to restrictions or non-availability. For a fee, they also offer pick-up services throughout Germany. The Soldier/Family member will bear all costs and potential risks associated with using these companies. Contact your local transportation office or commercial travel office for a list of potential sources.

Q. What documentation is required to ship my pet to the U.S.?

A. The original and one copy of a health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian stating that the animal is healthy enough to travel by air and is free of injury and disease. The certificate must be dated 10-days or less from the date your animal will be shipped. A rabies vaccination certificate issued and signed by a licensed veterinarian at least 30-days old but not older than one year from the date your animal will be shipped is required. If your pet is less than 12 weeks old you should obtain a memorandum from a licensed veterinarian that waives the rabies requirement.

Q. I have heard that some airlines will not accept a pet in a collapsible kennel. Is this true?

A. Yes. Collapsible or foldable kennels are prohibited by most airlines. The kennel used to ship your pet must meet USDA guidelines for size, ventilation, strength and design. Animals must have enough room to stand up and turn around and each species must have its own kennel with the exception of compatible cats and dogs of similar size. When in doubt use a larger kennel. A contact address and phone number in the states, and two copies of your orders to help speed your pet through customs.

Q. What are the feeding instructions for my pet?

A. Call or visit your airlines website for feeding instructions. Most airlines and pet shipping companies require a 24-hour feeding schedule be attached to the kennel. This feeding schedule will assist the airline in providing care for your animal in case it is diverted from its original destination.

You, as a pet owner, are required to certify your pet had been offered food and water within four hours of transport, and the documentation must include the time and date of feeding. Food and water dishes must be securely attached and be accessible to caretakers without opening the kennel. Food and water must be provided to puppies and kittens every 12 hours if they are two to four months old. Mature animals must be fed every 24 hours and given water every 12 hours.

Q. My family and I bought a newborn puppy and he's two-weeks old today. Is he old enough to fly?

A. Not yet. Your pet must be at least eight-weeks old and weaned before traveling by air.

Q. How do I find additional information on shipping pets?

A. There are great Internet sites that provide tips and information on pet shipping. In addition, each airline has rules, policies, and procedures for shipping pets. It would be beneficial to visit your air carrier's website prior to shipping your animal.

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The U.S. Army Installation Management Command, Europe Region (IMCOM-Europe) is one of six regional offices created Oct. 24, 2006, (formerly known as Installation Management Agency) as part of an Army-wide initiative to focus management of Army installations around the world under one organization. IMCOM-Europe is responsible for all facets of support for U.S. Army Soldiers and Families in Europe from drivers' licenses to child care to force protection. As the landlord for all U.S. Army facilities in Europe, IMCOM-Europe is responsible for infrastructure and continuing the Army's strong commitment to environmental protection. Its higher headquarters is located in Arlington, Va.